

NCDOT Rail Division

The Rail Report



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Completed Project Boosts Economic Development Opportunities

In March of 2021, a rail spur and yard construction project was completed which serves the new EGGER Wood Products LLC manufacturing facility in Lexington, N.C. The Rail Industrial Access Program under the Freight Rail and Rail Crossing Safety Improvement (FRRCSI) fund provided \$400,000 towards track construction costs. The EGGER manufacturing facility is benefiting from distribution opportunities by rail, contributing to reduced shipping costs while reducing heavy truck traffic on our state's highways.



EGGER Group, headquartered in St. Johann, Tirol, Austria, is one of the leading manufacturers of international wood-based materials. EGGER operations provide a variety of wood products that support the furniture industry, wood distribution, building markets and the home improvement business. The company's product range includes laminates, raw particleboard, thermally fused laminate, Medium Density Fiberboard, edge banding, moulding and laminate flooring. These products are found in countless public and private spaces worldwide.





North Carolina was one of four states considered to host the recently constructed manufacturing facility – the first and only EGGER facility in the U.S. and one of 20 around the globe. The Lexington location was selected, due in large part, to its proximity to a robust freight rail network. A collaboration between EGGER, Norfolk Southern Railway, the North Carolina Railroad Company, and the N.C. Department of Transportation made rail service possible and helped to bring this innovative company to North Carolina.

“As EGGER was planning its first production plant in the U.S., rail access to distribute our products throughout North America was of crucial importance. Had the Lexington site not had potential rail access, EGGER would not have selected the site for development. EGGER is greatly appreciative of the extensive efforts by NCRR, NCDOT and many others for facilitating on-site rail access to the property.”

Ken Brown, EGGER plant manager for logistics

Building on the success and lessons learned by developing their many manufacturing facilities, the Lexington site is the most state-of-the art facility operated by EGGER. The location also boasts a cutting-edge design center and showroom. Construction began in March 2018 and the facility was operational as of late 2020. The massive 238-acre site includes a reserve of more than 88 acres for planned future expansion.





The facility manufactures particleboard with thermally fused lamination (TFL) capabilities. The manufacturing cycle begins with sustainably-sourced wood chips and particles which are processed through many stages to produce raw particleboard, as well as TFL panels in a variety of colors, designs and finishes. This American-made product, primarily sourced within a 100-mile radius of the facility, is then shipped by rail to destinations throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, and locations abroad such as Italy and Austria.

“Lexington has the ability, at full capacity, to produce enough board to circle the equator every three years,” said Ken Brown, EGGER plant manager for logistics.

The Lexington site represents more than a new manufacturing facility; it delivers investments in the state, county, and local economies, the creation of jobs and development of careers, and efficient use of the North Carolina freight rail network. The first phase of development invested approximately \$500 million in infrastructure and will bring an estimated 400 jobs to Davidson County. When fully developed, EGGER will provide more than \$700 million in capital investment.

Local and regional opportunities, however, are not limited to the immediate creation of jobs. EGGER partnered with Davidson-Davie Community College to develop a four-year apprenticeship program. The program offers on-site education and development opportunities toward mechanical and electrical related career paths. During this apprenticeship, participants enjoy a full-time wage, benefits, and free tuition while gaining real-world work experience. The intent is to invest in local talent who, in turn, have the potential to enjoy a career at the manufacturing facility in a skilled position.

The rail industrial access arm of the FRRCSI program works to spur economic development in North Carolina through strategic connection of North Carolina-based industries to our robust freight rail network. Successful, rail projects such as the EGGER rail connection, embody the goals of the FRRCSI program. The NCDOT was pleased to partner with EGGER Wood Products on the successful completion of this important rail connection.



Amtrak Celebrates its 50th in NC



[Hear remarks from Sec. Pete Buttigieg, Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff, Amtrak President Stephen Gardner and Gov. Roy Cooper on ABC11 Eyewitness News](#)

On April 30, Amtrak chose Raleigh Union Station in North Carolina to celebrate its 50th anniversary. Speakers at the event included (L to R) U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff, Amtrak President Stephen Gardner and N.C. Governor Roy Cooper.

NC By Train Ridership on the Rise

Carolinian and *Piedmont* ridership is on the rise as the state recovers from the pandemic. Both train services are among the best performing in the Amtrak system.



The *Carolinian* is a leader among state-sponsored passenger rail services for ridership recovery as compared to pre-pandemic levels. Ridership hit the lowest point in April 2020, down 94% compared to 2019 levels.

With the recovery, the *Carolinian* is back to pre-pandemic levels and continues to rise as passengers return to normal activity. *Piedmont* ridership has increased to approximately 90% of pre-pandemic weekly levels and continues to increase.



Families looking for fun summer adventures can enjoy a special \$5 kids fare to travel the rails in North Carolina.

Through Aug. 31, customers can use discount code V256 when [booking at NCByTrain.org](https://ncbytrain.org) to take advantage of the one-way \$5 fare for one child age 2-12 with the purchase of a regularly priced adult ticket. This offer is valid for travel every day of the week. Terms and conditions apply.

Families can board at any of these cities when traveling NC By Train: Charlotte, Kannapolis, Salisbury, High Point, Greensboro, Burlington, Durham, Cary, Raleigh, Selma, Wilson and Rocky Mount.

Discount fare valid for one child with each paying adult. One-day advance purchase is required. Other discounts (senior, State employee, etc.) will not apply to adult fare. For more information visit ncbytrain.org or call 1-800-BY-TRAIN.

Traveling on NC By Train is a Great Way to See What N.C. Cities Have to Offer

It's easy to take the train to explore North Carolina cities. May's feature article in *Our State* magazine is about traveling to Raleigh by train along with ideas of fun things while spending the day exploring, eating and shopping. The July issue features Salisbury. **Read both stories at the links below:**

[NC By Train: Fourth Stop, Raleigh](#)

[NC By Train: Last Stop, Historic Salisbury](#)



When it comes to being safe around railroad tracks, the message is always the same...365 days a year! Help the Rail Division spread the word by sharing the message below!



As seen on Twitter...

Follow [NC By Train](#) for the latest updates about happenings on North Carolina's passenger train service.



Rail Division Multi-discipline Collaboration Proves Successful: **A Crossing Case Study**

On January 5, 2020 a vehicle traveling south on Harrison Avenue in Cary turned right onto the Norfolk Southern crossing and became disabled on the track. The driver and passenger exited moments before a westbound Norfolk Southern train collided with the vehicle.

A computer aided dispatch records request was made to Cary Police Department for all events associated with the Harrison Avenue crossing between January 2014 and January 2020. A review showed 23 instances of vehicles traveling south on Harrison Avenue, turning right onto the railroad crossing and becoming disabled occurred between April 2015 and January 5, 2020. Ninety-five percent of the events occurred after dark.

Thirteen vehicles made right turns onto the tracks in 2019 alone, a 680% increase above the 2015-2017 average.



Interviews revealed the opening of a new sports bar in July 2018, and coinciding with the swift and extreme increase in drivers turning right onto the tracks. Interviews also suggest there were likely more events that occur than are reported to Cary PD.

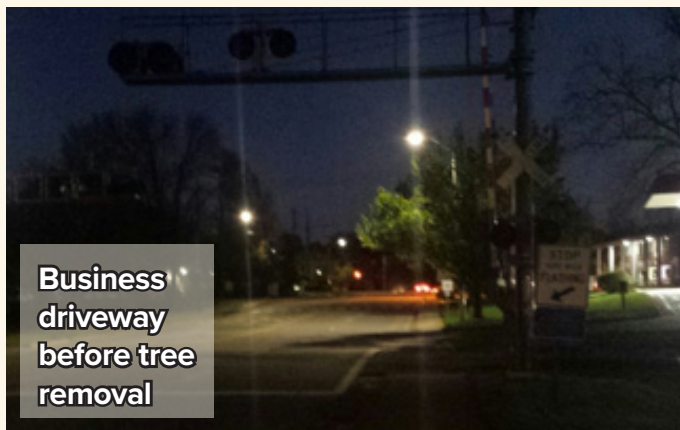
The Rail Division immediately assembled several internal and external personnel from Norfolk Southern and the Cary Police Department to investigate the crossing-related events, identify contributing factors and recommend countermeasure solutions.

An at-scene diagnostic meeting evaluated the signals, gates, sight distances, visibility and crash data analysis as well as interviews with nearby business owners, patrons, and property owners.

Video and photographs of the crossing after sunset were made from both the motorist and train approach perspective. Additional nighttime observations of driver behaviors, visibility, ambient lighting, and conspicuity of the crossing were observed and evaluated along with crash report and police call data.

The multi-discipline group collaborated with additional Rail Division members and recommended five ways to improve the Harrison Avenue crossing.

- 1** LIGHTING: Improve Lighting – Town of Cary, remove tree blocking streetlight



- 2** DELINEATION: Remove 'bulb-out' expanse of asphalt west of the sidewalk that resembles a travel lane
- 3** DELINEATION: Paint a 'faux' sidewalk across the crossing, connecting the existing sidewalk
- 4** DELINEATION: Curb and gutter markings across the crossing
- 5** CROSSING CONSPICUITY: DO NOT BLOCK THE BOX pavement markings

The Town of Cary removed the tree blocking the streetlight and over the past few months added curb and gutter markings while extending lane lines through the crossing. Norfolk Southern removed the asphalt 'bulb-out' in April 2021.



Since implementing the recommended crossing treatments, only one incident has occurred at the Harrison Avenue crossing and involved an impaired driver.

This case study is a prime example of the Rail Division's commitment to improving rail safety. The results of this project show what can be accomplished through strong collaboration. We want to recognize the efforts of the Cary Police Department, Town of Cary and Norfolk Southern in improving conditions at this location.

CCX Construction Update, Rocky Mount



Construction is ongoing at the Carolina Connector (CCX) intermodal terminal in Edgecombe County. The large electric wide span cranes are up and work continues to build the final tracks in the crane area, and finalize and commission the cranes.



Charlotte Gateway Station – Phase I Construction Update



Trade Street looking south toward the block that will be the primary station area for the City's mixed-use development



Concourse construction between 4th and Trade streets

The Rail Division is leading the planning, design and construction of Charlotte Gateway Station Phase 1. The City of Charlotte is progressing the effort for Phase 2 with developer Gateway Partners for the large mixed use development and station. The Phase I project is targeted for completion in 2023. The scope includes building bridges to support passenger rail tracks, a center island level-boarding platform and concourse, plus railroad track and signals.

Charlotte Gateway Station – Phase I Construction Update (continued)



Construction of platform between 5th and Trade streets



Construction of concourse between 4th and Trade streets

Rail Staff Provides Updates at Rail Association of North Carolina Annual Meeting

Rail Division Director Jason Orthner and Planning and Development Branch Manager James Bridges participated in this year's Rail Association Annual Meeting on May 17 in Asheville. In addition to overall division updates, their presentation focused on a topic of interest to North Carolina's regional freight and class one railroads – Freight Rail and Rail Crossing Safety Improvement Fund opportunities.

This partnership between NCDOT and the railroads continues to enhance the strength of North Carolina's rail system, providing much needed industrial access, crossing and safety improvements and growing North Carolina's economy.



James Bridges provides FRRCSI updates

Henderson County Crossing Improved

Our featured crossing this month is on the Blue Ridge Southern Railway in Henderson County. NCDOT Division 14 and Henderson County Maintenance assisted the Blue Ridge Southern Railway and the Rail Division with improving a crossing on Hilgirt Road near Balfour. The original asphalt and timber crossing surface was deteriorating, and the crossing timbers were failing and patched. The new asphalt and rubber rail seal crossing provides a safer and smoother ride for local motorists.



Improved Hilgirt Road crossing